

NEWS RELEASE

September 19, 2001

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UTAH HOME OF CHAMPION "BIG TREE."

It's official. Utah is still the home of the national champion blue spruce. Not that it hasn't had its challengers. First recognized as a champion "big tree" in 1980, it was dethroned in 1984 by a tree in Colorado's Gunnison National Forest. Its defeat didn't last long and it was re-instated the same year. Two years later it was dethroned again but regained the title in 1991 and is still the champion.

"Big tree designations are made on most species throughout the United States," explained Tony Dietz, urban forestry coordinator for the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands. "It might seem silly to some but to those of us who love trees we like to find the biggest and best."

Big tree champions are listed in the *American Forestry Association's National Register of Big Trees*. Utah also maintains the *Utah Register of Big Trees*. The national register currently lists more than 700 champion native and naturalized tree species.

"Utah's champion, known as the 'Three Forks' tree, stands 127 feet in height with a circumference of 190.3 inches," said Dietz. "The spread, or widest reach of its branches, is 43 feet, however it's obvious the tree is not as healthy and vigorous as it was 20 years ago."

Utah's champion lives quietly in the Duchesne Ranger District of the Ashley National Forest in Wasatch County. Utah also claims national champions for Rocky Mountain juniper, Limber pine, Cliffrose, Rocky Mountain White fir, and Alderleaf cercocarpus.

The Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands encourages all tree-lovers, hikers, campers and families to be on the lookout for champion-sized trees. Should you be successful your name will appear in the national or Utah registers as a champion tree finder.

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